

THE SENATE SPOTLIGHT

Georgia State Senate Newsletter



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August 2006

Studies continue on taxes, trauma centers, more



Senate Study Committee meetings focus on important issues

Senators and staff are hard at work, as many Senate Study Committees are well underway. Over the last month, committees have met across the State to examine tax reform issues, the need for additional trauma centers, high school athletics, local government issues and much more. Here is a brief update on some of the study committee work to this point.

Comprehensive State Trauma Services Joint Study

Committee – chaired by Sen. Cecil Staton, this Study Committee will look at the need to maintain and expand trauma care services throughout the State. Currently, Georgia has four level-one trauma centers located in Atlanta, Augusta, Macon and Savannah. The Committee held its first meeting on August 14, at the Capitol, and concluded with a tour of Grady Memorial Hospital.

Limited Taxation Study Committee – chaired by Sen. Mitch Seabaugh, the Committee is considering measures to provide meaningful limits on state government taxing and spending powers, so as to expend revenue only as necessary. Other growing states have already implemented reductions by providing that the annual growth in state expenditures cannot exceed a percentage that reflects citizens' personal income. The Committee held its second meeting at the Capitol on August 10.

DeKalb County Government Study Committee – Chairman Emanuel Jones heads up this study, which will focus on various organizational forms of government to facilitate a more effective and efficient county government and democratic representation in DeKalb County. This will include city incorporation, analysis of DeKalb County Government, and the expansion of existing cities. The Committee held its first meeting in downtown Decatur on August 15, and meets again on September 5.

Septage Disposal Study Committee – chaired by Sen. John Bulloch, the study focuses on the issues surrounding septic tank disposal in the State, and aims to make recommendations on the more than two million active individual on-site wastewater treatment systems or septic tanks in Georgia. The Study Committee met for the first time in July and plans to meet again soon.

Comprehensive Tax Reform Study Committee – also chaired by Sen. Seabaugh, the Committee has been studying the State's current tax code to determine how best to modernize and revitalize the revenue structure, as to create a fair and flexible tax system for Georgia. The Committee met three times recently, including meetings in Camilla, Marietta and Griffin.

[Study Committee update...cont'd on pg. 2]

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High School Athletic Overview Committee – co-chaired by Sen. Judson Hill and Rep. Chuck Martin, the Committee will promote fairness and equity in establishing and implementing any new standards for high school athletic associations, and promote academic achievement and good sportsmanship in all high school athletics in the State. The Committee held its first meeting at the Capitol on August 4, and plans to meet again in September.

Mental Health Screening of Children Study

Committee – this Study Committee is led by Sen. Nancy Schaefer, and was created to look at new policy brought forth in Senate Bill 430 from the 2006 session. The bill would have required parental consent prior to the mental screening of any student in a local school system, but it did not pass in 2006. The Committee met for the first time on August 16, at the Capitol.

Comprehensive Water Desalination Joint Study Committee – chaired by Sen. Ross Tolleson, the Desalination Study Committee will look at the potential of using desalination to augment water supply sources, to reduce water shortages in future droughts and to preserve water as a valuable resource. The Committee held its first meetings in St. Simons on August 22-23.

In the upcoming months, expect meetings of the ATM Safety, Court Surcharges, Removal of Mercury Switches and the Grassroots Arts Program Study Committees, as well as several others that are currently in the works.

Spotlight on... GSU Legislative Staff Appreciation Day

On Wednesday, July 26, staff members of the Senate, House and Governor's Office were treated to the annual Capitol Staff Appreciation Luncheon by representatives of Georgia State University. Staffers enjoyed barbecue sandwiches, coleslaw and sweet tea, compliments of Tom Lewis, Dene Sheheane, Jason Thomas and others from GSU. Many thanks to the sponsors of this fun yearly event!



Spotlight on... New faces around the State Capitol



Surely you've noticed one or two of the new faces around the Capitol and Coverdell Office Building lately, as most offices have added new personnel to help to achieve our goal – to serve the people of the state of Georgia. The Senate Press Office welcomes two new faces – **Chris Bailey**, Communications Specialist, and **Lacey McLaughlin**, Administrative Assistant. In addition to its new Director Jill Fike, the Senate Research Office has added **Ginny Powell**, Senior Policy Analyst. **Amy Kreig** has joined the Secretary of the Senate's Office as Calendar Clerk. **Clint Smith**, **LaMarcus Lawrence** and **Dell Claborne** have been hired in the IT Division to assist you with all computer/tech needs. The Office of Legislative Counsel welcomes

James McDonald and **Diana Daniels**. You also may have seen **David Northup** and **Patrick Brown** of the Fiscal Office working daily to improve our facilities. Since January, Legislative Assistants **Debra Charnote**, **Toni Collins**, **Donna Yeomans** and **Cecelia Dorsey** have joined the Senate staff as well. Recently, **E. Josh Willis** was added as Chief of Staff in the Office of Senate Majority Leader Tommie Williams. Please stop and say hello to these new staff members when the opportunity arises!

Employee Spotlight on... Alex Azarian



What is your current job and/or assignments?

I am a Principal Analyst in the Senate Research Office. Much of my job responsibility involves keeping the Senate apprised of policy issues in Georgia and throughout the U.S. The crux of my policy research falls under my areas of expertise, which are insurance & labor, public safety & homeland security and veterans & military affairs. As an analyst, I must also keep up with recent issues in these areas, and I must be proactive in that role. When we are in session, I am responsible for summarizing all legislation moving through my assigned committees. During the interim, I staff and assist with the coordination of the study committees to

which I am assigned.

How did you end up at the General Assembly?

I began working in and around the State Capitol in 1997. At the time, I was working as a bartender when a regular customer referred me to someone who was working up here as a lobbyist. That lobbyist was Bobby Rowan, who I'm sure most people know because of his time as a state senator. I worked with Bobby for two sessions, writing, researching and doing whatever it took to get things done. Through that job, I met many people that worked for the General Assembly, like Martha Wigton, who now works in the House Budget Office, and former Secretary of the Senate Frank Eldridge. That's how I heard about a full-time staff position opening up in Senate Research. I obtained a full-time position in the Research Office in 1999, and that's how I became a part of the General Assembly.

Tell me a little about your background. Birthplace, brothers and sisters, etc.

I was born and raised in Warwick, RI. When I was 17 years old, I joined the Army reserves, and I served for six years before I received my honorable discharge. I earned a BA in history from Rhode Island College, and a master's degree in history from Providence College. I moved to Atlanta in 1996. I have an older brother, Martin, who lives in Minneapolis, MN, and an older sister, Cynthia, who still lives in Rhode Island. I recently bought a townhouse in Smyrna, and I live there with my girlfriend Debi and our three cats. My parents also still live in Rhode Island.

Tell us about your hobbies and/or what you enjoy doing away from work...

Well, I have been spending much of my time these days getting settled into our new home, which sometimes can be like a second job. I also like to cook and I have been trying out new recipes lately. I've mostly been experimenting with pasta dishes and Asian cuisine when I have the time. I enjoy working out, whether it's lifting weights or cardio exercise. Also, Debi and I try to make it to the beach at least once a year for vacation.

The General Assembly can be an exciting place to work. What are some of your fondest memories of working with the state Senate?

One very vivid memory I have of working for the Senate occurred a few years back when Gov. Roy Barnes was in office, and there was a swirling debate over the state flag. I spent nearly a year researching and writing a report on the history of Georgia's state flags, and in particular the 1956 state flag and the 1956 legislative session. After the release of this report, state Sen. Rene Kemp called me into his office to compliment me on my work. He told me that the report I had written had left a very strong impression upon him, and that it may also have affected his decision in the voting process. Another thing I truly have enjoyed in my work with the Senate is that each year I take part in the legislative process. It's very exciting to work behind the scenes to assist in the many changes to our laws that take place each year.

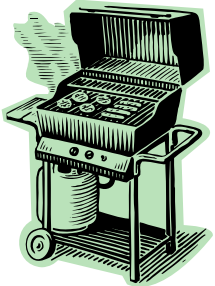
Senate Budget's Spotlight on... Monthly numbers



The revenue collected by the Department of Revenue for July 2006 (FY 06) was \$1,240,913,000.

This is an increase of 13.5 percent when compared to the revenue collected in July 2005 (FY 05), which was \$1,093,198,000. July was the first month of the new fiscal year (FY 07).

Senate Spotlight on . . . August Birthdays

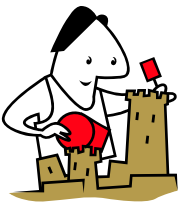


HAPPY BIRTHDAY to . . .



Senator Dan Weber
President Pro Tempore Eric Johnson
Senator Michael Meyer von Bremen
Senator Steen Miles
Senator John Wiles
Senator Ed Harbison
Debbie Sorrells- Secretary of the Senate's Office
Susan Henry- Legislative Assistant
Dell Claborne- IT Division
David Bundrick- Legislative Counsel
Angie Fiese- Senate Research Office
Teresa Adkins- Legislative Counsel
Jeremy Arie- Senate Press Office
James McDonald- Legislative Counsel

August 8th
August 20th
August 19th
August 20th
August 21st
August 25th
August 17th
August 6th
August 29th
August 5th
August 26th
August 13th
August 17th
August 6th



Enjoy your Labor Day weekend!!!

The Senate Press Office hopes that all Senators and staff members will spend time with their families, relaxing and enjoying the upcoming Labor Day holiday on Monday, September 4, 2006.

The Senate Spotlight is a product of the Senate Press Office. If you have a suggestion, a person you would like to nominate for the Employee Spotlight or a Senate-related article to contribute, please contact our office at 404.656.0028.